



wattpad 

## THE FUTURE OF FICTION

Wattpad Research Reveals Generational Shift  
in Reading Habits, Skepticism of AI in Publishing



# INTRODUCTION

Technology is rewriting how people connect with books, authors, and reading communities. Today, nine out of 10 readers agree that storytelling technologies will shape the future of reading. And while AI is a hot topic in the publishing world, the vast majority of US readers (92%) think it's important that humans should be involved in writing and producing books. That's according to new survey data\* from Wattpad, a leading webnovel and storytelling community, and Wakefield Research, which reveals an evolving reading culture and fiction landscape across generations.

Take a deeper dive into the reading trends across various generations, and learn what Gen Z's take on where the future of reading is headed.



# METHODOLOGY

The Wattpad Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research ([www.wakefieldresearch.com](http://www.wakefieldresearch.com)) among 1,000 US adults ages 18+ with an oversampling of 100 additional Gen-Z respondents, between October 10th and October 17th, 2023, using an email invitation and an online survey. Data has been weighted.

**Note: Generations are classified according to the below age brackets:**

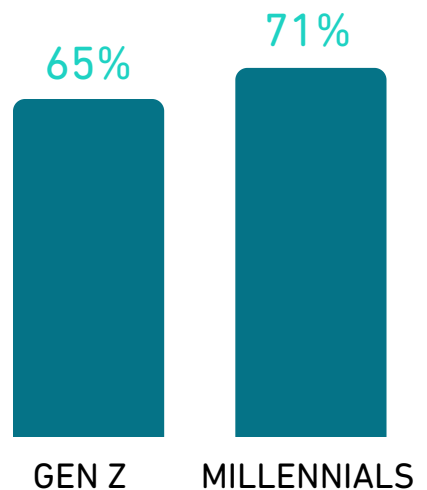
- Gen Z = Born between 1997 - 2012 (only adults 18+ were surveyed)
- Millennial = Born between 1981 and 1996
- Gen X = Born between 1965 - 1980
- Boomers = Born between 1946 - 1964



# YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE EMBRACING DIGITAL FORMATS FOR READING

Older readers have been slower to adapt to digital reading technology, and digital formats are increasingly popular among younger generations.

When it comes to embracing digital formats such as **webnovels, ebooks and webcomics**, Gen Z and Millennials are leading the charge, while less than half of the Gen X and Boomer generations say the same.



## DIVERSITY IS A KEY DRIVER FOR EMBRACING DIGITAL FORMATS

61% of Gen Z and 70% of Millennials agree that ebooks, webnovels, and webcomics give them access to content that's harder to find in traditional stores and libraries, including **LGBTQ+ and minority-focused content**. This was true for only 54% and 49% of Gen X and Boomers respectively.

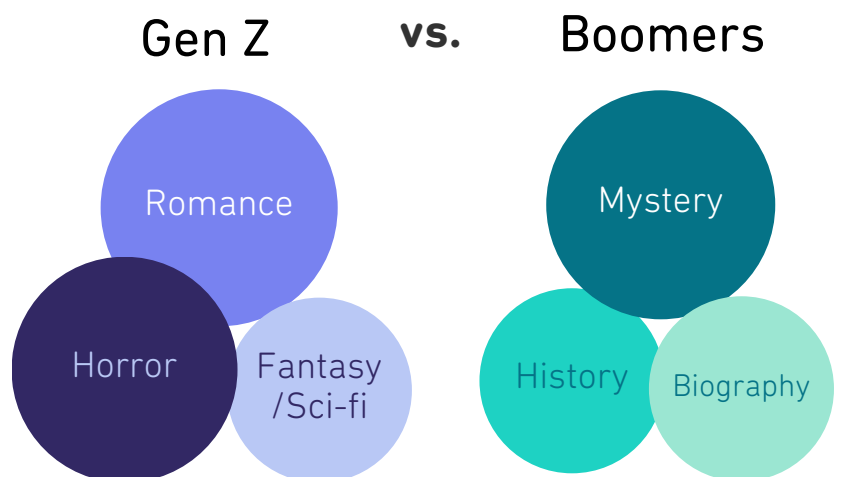
70%  
of Gen Z

82%  
of Millennials

Say diversity is important when choosing books, movies or other forms of entertainment, compared to 57% of Gen X and 60% of Boomers.

Not only are younger demographics more passionate about supporting diversity in fiction, they are also interested in a **wider range of fiction**.

### Top Genres





29%

of Gen Z reading LGBTQ+ stories for fun compared to only 5% of Boomers and 6% of Gen X readers.

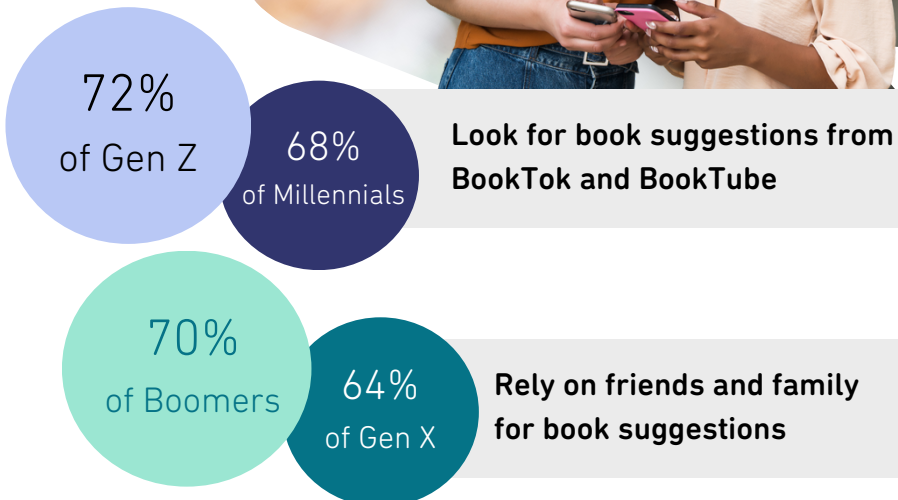
### Gen Z are also much more likely to seek out LGBTQ+ stories than older generations.

Platforms like Wattpad play a role in this growth by providing access to this genre, filling a void that traditional bookstores struggle to match.

## FINDING THE NEXT GOOD READ

When looking at how people find recommendations for their next read, the survey saw wide discrepancies among generations, but one thing remained clear - human taste and curation remain paramount.

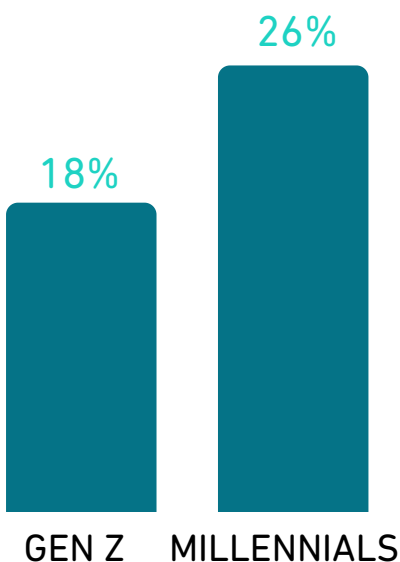
80% of respondents prefer recommendations from a person, versus 20% who prefer AI or algorithmic recommendations.



Online reading communities like Wattpad and GoodReads are also important ways for younger readers to find a great book, with 38% of Gen Z and 48% of Millennials noting these kinds of platforms are important sources for book recommendations.



### Readers who turn to celebrity book clubs for book recommendations



Celebrity book clubs hold more sway among Millennials compared to Gen Z





# THE FUTURE OF BOOKS AND GEN Z'S PERSPECTIVES ON AI

Looking further at how technology impacts fiction, internal research from Wattpad\*\* sheds light on how authors feel about AI. A survey of current Wattpad authors reveals that they are skeptical of AI tools.

**The research reveals author concerns about AI's influence in publishing, particularly its impact on marginalized communities.**

Believe AI could jeopardize elements of inclusive storytelling, like character authenticity and diversity.

**54%**  
of Wattpad  
Authors

Of authors worry that AI could reproduce systemic biases and undermine sensitivity reading, a crucial process to ensure cultural accuracy and respect in stories.

**23%**  
of Wattpad  
Authors


The survey reveals skepticism of AI tools, with the majority (79%) of writers revealing they have never used AI to aid their creative process. Nearly half (43%) of authors also expressed concerns that AI could limit monetization and publishing opportunities.

**However, while authors mostly remain skeptical there was some optimism...**

While authors remain skeptical, 58% acknowledged AI's potential to support editing and 45% noted the technology could help create cover art.

## IN CONCLUSION

"Our research shows that reading and writing are still important ways for people to connect, even as technology creates new ways to engage with fiction. Gen Z and Millennial audiences are actively seeking more from fiction, including broader representation of a much wider range of voices and perspectives," says Nick Uskoski, Head of Content and Creator Development at Wattpad. "As a new generation of readers shift toward celebrating and elevating underrepresented voices in publishing, Wattpad will continue to redefine how authors build global audiences and make money for their work."



GET IN TOUCH

Want to reach millions  
of Gen Zs on Wattpad?

Contact us at:  
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